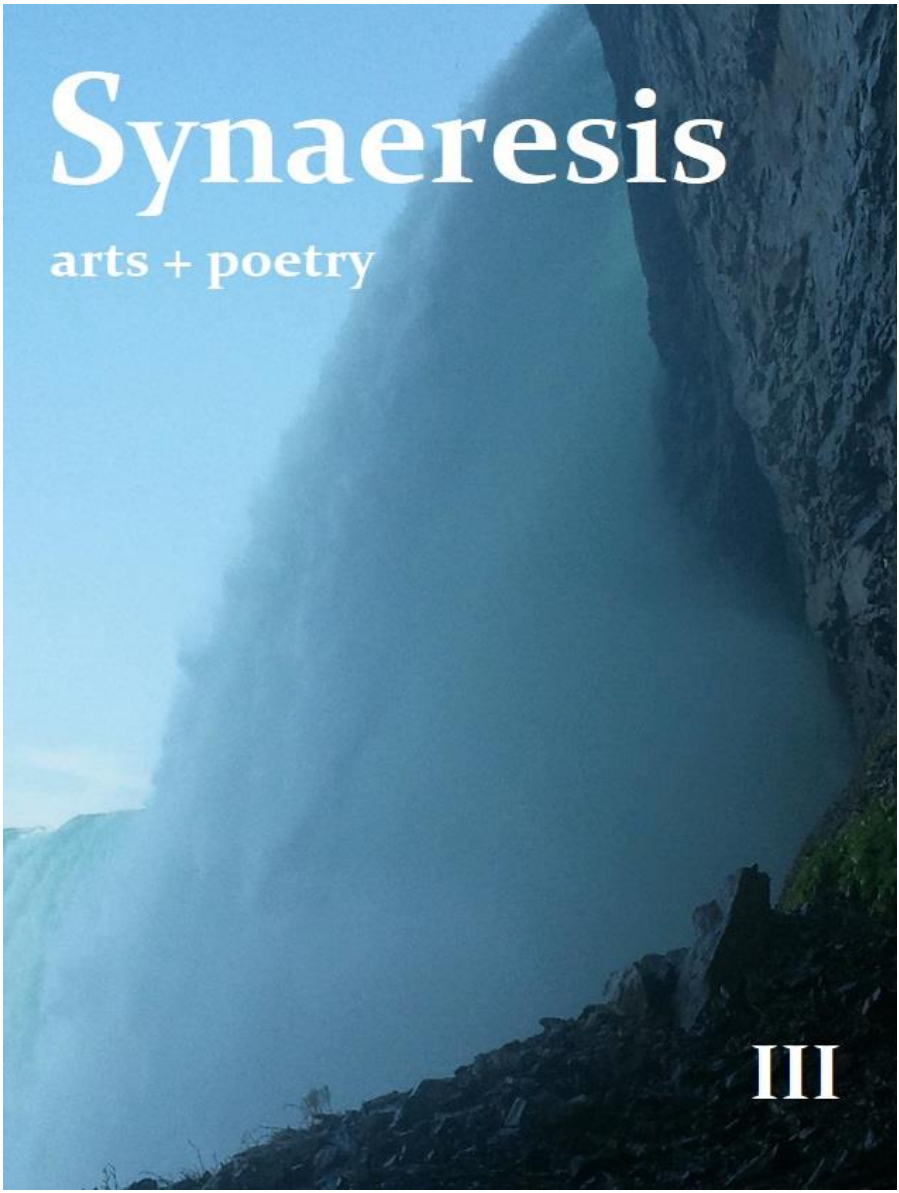

Synaeresis
arts + poetry
III

Synaeresis

arts + poetry



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Ice at Rotary Cove, Goderich 2018 – **Andreas Gripp**



Ronda Wicks Eller

This Trinket

I give you this trinket--
a heat-tested, gold bracelet
shaped for infinity.

Notice its fine surface detail,
the beveled leaf patterns
discreetly adorning naked Achates,
the feathered strokes on the eagle
alit on his right shoulder
and Aeneas asleep at his feet.

Turn it over
to see the word “finem”
heftily engraved with our initials.

This trinket is for you--
an invaluable asset
to keep for sentiment
or to use as money on a rainy day.

Static

The un-seamstress Mary
circumcises cloth;
incising the sloth
of an old linen shroud.
She's too flayed of mind
to commune with soul
and banks simple hours
in Union Station
where commuted lost coins
offer bare stitching
for winter’s raw knuckles.
And she statelessly hums
a dirgeful rendition
of The Old Rugged Cross
for the Son she also
found as money long ago.
As a static witness
of rush-hour flux,
her mind unweaves
time’s maoire,
its layered flax subdued
beneath and beside
subway patron feet
happily intending Easter

Ronda Wicks Eller was born in Toronto and raised in Woodstock, Ontario. She released her first chapbook in 1995 and now has a chapbook and three 60-80 page books in print with a fourth one in progress. Ronda's work is published in Canada, U.S.A., England and Bangladesh in various literary journals and anthologies. She has received awards, facilitated poetry workshops, adjudicated contests and reviewed others' work. As the owner of Sky-Wing Press, she functions as editor, artist, layout designer and publisher. She was Media Coordinator on the Canadian Poetry Association's Board of Directors 2004-2012, is Consul for the Canadian Poetry Guild (CPA's new name) since 2016.

Koral Scott

Days of My Week

He sits with her on Wednesday mornings,
and with me on Tuesday nights;
kisses her on Mondays,
and slyly brushes my arm in a room full
of acquaintances on Thursday

but on Fridays we sit alone,
thinking about space.
The corners we stare at
speaking secrets others have left behind.

I took an extracurricular
so I could see him more on Sundays,
but the days will end next week
and I'll find myself wondering about Saturday.

Koral Scott currently lives in London, Ontario, where she co-organizes *London Open Mic Poetry* and assists Poetry London as a committee member. In the past, Koral has worked closely with *The Rusty Toque* and read as a featured poet for *Poetry 6 Pack* at Brown & Dickson booksellers, *Couplets: Collaborative Poetry Series,* and at *London Open Mic Poetry.*

Katherine L. Gordon

Restless is the Heart of an Exile

This little town holds
a contained and fragile charm
where my elsewhere-birthed spirit
learns to survive.
My sustaining friends candle it into home
though shadows shimmer in curtained corners.
The land of ancestors buried in hard-won sacred soil
calls out to my waiting bones.
I am forbidden to answer,
grieve for my moment to come
when alien soil covers restless remains
and spirit hovers between
the world that barely embraces me
and the pulsing claim of blood and ligament,
heart, spirit and tribal ties
that scream for my absorption
back into fiery particles that stoked my entity.
Wine cannot placate, bread of other fields seldom satisfies,
a communion I must re-learn.

Katherine L. Gordon is a rural Ontario poet, publisher, contest adjudicator, editor and reviewer, working to promote Canadian poetry around the world. She has many books, chapbooks, anthologies and collaborations with fine contemporaries whose work inspires her. Her poems have been translated and awarded internationally. She edited the recent anthology, *Piping at the End of Days,* published by Valley Press.

Carrie Connel-Gripp

Deconsecrated

A cross upended in jest
as saints gaze into a space
where once a myriad
of foreheads were touched
by drops of holy tears
leading to dismayed cries.

A baptism of distilled vapours,
libations poured down the throats
of those forgetting the unknowable
ancestors who built,
brick by brick,
season by season,
mass by mass,
a community of praise and worship.

The rose window, a kaleidoscope
charged by the sun,
sits above the angels, lambs and doves.

Apostles to a different host
re-consecrating in frivolity,
immodesty, impious celebration.

Costumed vices epitomize
the concerns of modern life.
Surface ripples hide a deeper
despair of futility.

Shunned by the admired;
forgotten by the acolytes:
persecuted,
tried in absentia,
gossip, rumour,
misperceived transgressions.

No creed,
no redemption,
no forgiveness
in flesh and stone:
irreverent temples.

Anticipated Loneliness

Arrhythmia.
You considerately tell me
you will precede me in death.
And I will have to reinvent
myself like I have
half a dozen times
(never mother,
a role I refused to play
except to the four-footed).
A hitch in the pattern of our lives.

A few days after early winter celebrations,
and the wind blows across
our new hometown
obscuring Father Time in the Courthouse.
White blinding sheets
whip the sentinels in the square,
those that replaced the old guard
when Gaia forced the others
into early retirement
and a sudden death.

If we could choose the day of our passing,
I would pick an anniversary
twenty years hence,
following a companionship of joy,
with a modicum of success
in leaving our mark for posterity;
a hint of prestige
in a world of
abandonment
and forgetfulness.

Carrie Connel-Gripp is a poet and fiction writer living in London, Ontario, with her husband Andreas and their fur kids Mabel and Mila. Her recent work has been published in *Fteroka Logia* and *Aphotic Realm.* She has 2 books of poetry published by Harmonia Press: *A Day in Pieces* (2013) and *Persona Grata* (2016).

April Bulmer

Grammy

I dream my heart is a blue thing
a little purse:
keys and coins and a cotton handkerchief
damp with curse.
The skin of the bag and its scars.

But my mother's rub:
a pale salve and a chamois.
My heart supple then to the touch.
Clean and stuffed with love.

All night the moon too
a sack heavy with rouge and balm
and a note from her mom...

Something falls from the sky:
leather glove?

But in the morning
I imagine the sun
a mirror.
Goddess, her bright reflection:
her soft, pierced ears.

Gillian

Once I loved a boy
his eyes the shade
of copper coins.
He would not dance
with me.
I held myself like a shawl
and wore soft pads
against my loins.
My heart burned for him
like a candle.
The wick sturdy and trimmed.
For I imagined his breath
and the soft cream
of my tallow.

April Bulmer has had ten books of poetry published and was shortlisted for the Pat Lowther Memorial Award for the best book of poetry by a Canadian woman. Her forthcoming book containing these two poems is *Out of Darkness, Light* (Hidden Brook Press, 2018). She holds three Masters Degrees in creative writing, religious studies and theological studies. April was born and raised in Toronto, but has lived in Cambridge, Ontario for over 20 years. Contact her at april.poet@bell.net

Penn Kemp

Steal, Stole, Stun

The dried heads of black fox hung
from my grandmother's stole as if
ready to strike. Dead flat button jet
eyes shut tight to their own secret
wiles. When she turned to talk to me
from the front seat of dad's Meteor,
the foxes would swing and turn back
as if they too had something to say.
And what they whispered was darker
than words, darker than the deepest
lake they drowned in. That dark knew
how to spread and fill the entire car.
Their dark buried my grandmother's kind
words in black ink. They buried her and
her stories of wild Irish banshees wailing
on roofs to warn us of imminent death.

What the Wag Entails

A wild Fox confronted, cornered or caged,
snarls at encroaching humans in fury and
will not let us approach without resistance.
We could buy him as pet on the Internet at
great expense, but why? He'd always prefer
freedom in forest and meadow, his terroir.
The tame Fox stays skittish, undomesticated,
untrained. Like border collies he's too smart
or too skittish to put up with boredom.
His tail might swivel in greeting like a dog's
or frustration like a cat's. Who can read sign
language or Fox's inclination 'till it's too late?
Better keep him busy, entertained or he'll
run amuck into your cushion, your couch,
your nightmare.

Poet, performer and playwright **Penn Kemp** has been lauded as a "one-woman literary industry" while London's inaugural Poet Laureate (2010-2012) and Western's Writer-in-Residence (2009-2010). Her newest books of poetry are *Local Heroes* (Insomniac Press, April 2018) and *Fox Haunts* (Aeolus House, September 2018). Two new plays published in 2017 about local hero Teresa Harris followed her previous books from Quattro Books, *Barbaric Cultural Practice* and *Jack Layton: Art in Action*. See www.pennkemp.weebly.com

Pan — **Jim Kemp**



Jim Kemp (1914-1983) was a London painter, instrumental in London's burgeoning art scene in the '50s. He was also advertising and publicity executive at London Life. His painting, *Pan*, will be featured on the cover of his daughter Penn's forthcoming book, *Fox Haunts* (Aeolus Press, Fall 2018). His story is in Penn's new book, *Local Heroes* (Insomniac Press).

Windmill, Aylmer, 2016 – **Andreas Gripp**



Vivian Wagner

Peter Pan's Shadow Seamstress

It was just a regular job, to
be honest, except for the strange
thinness of the shadow and the air.
I poked my finger at one point,
and the blood seemed to hang
in the air, at once lighter
and heavier than the
materials I sewed with.
But in the end, I did my work,
got my coins, and went home,
as tired as usual, as spent.

Black Forest Baker

I made the bread that Hansel and Gretel used for their crumbs. I'm a baker down the way, in the village, and I didn't pay them much mind when they'd come in with their few coins for day-old or week-old bread, the worst of the worse. Sometimes I pointed them out back where they fished a loaf out of the trash. But I know they got their bread here. I remember seeing them, a few days before all that happened. And I remember them walking home, each with a loaf under arm. They must have known they'd need it. Me, I just keep baking. You never know what good you'll do with your daily work, or how it will, in the end, fail. All you can do is knead. All you can do, without knowing if it'll create or destroy, is stoke the fire.

Vivian Wagner lives in New Concord, Ohio, where she teaches English at Muskingum University. She's the author of *Fiddle: One Woman, Four Strings, and 8,000 Miles of Music* (Citadel-Kensington), *The Village* (Kelsay Books), and *Making* (Origami Poems Project).

Rose Aiello Morales

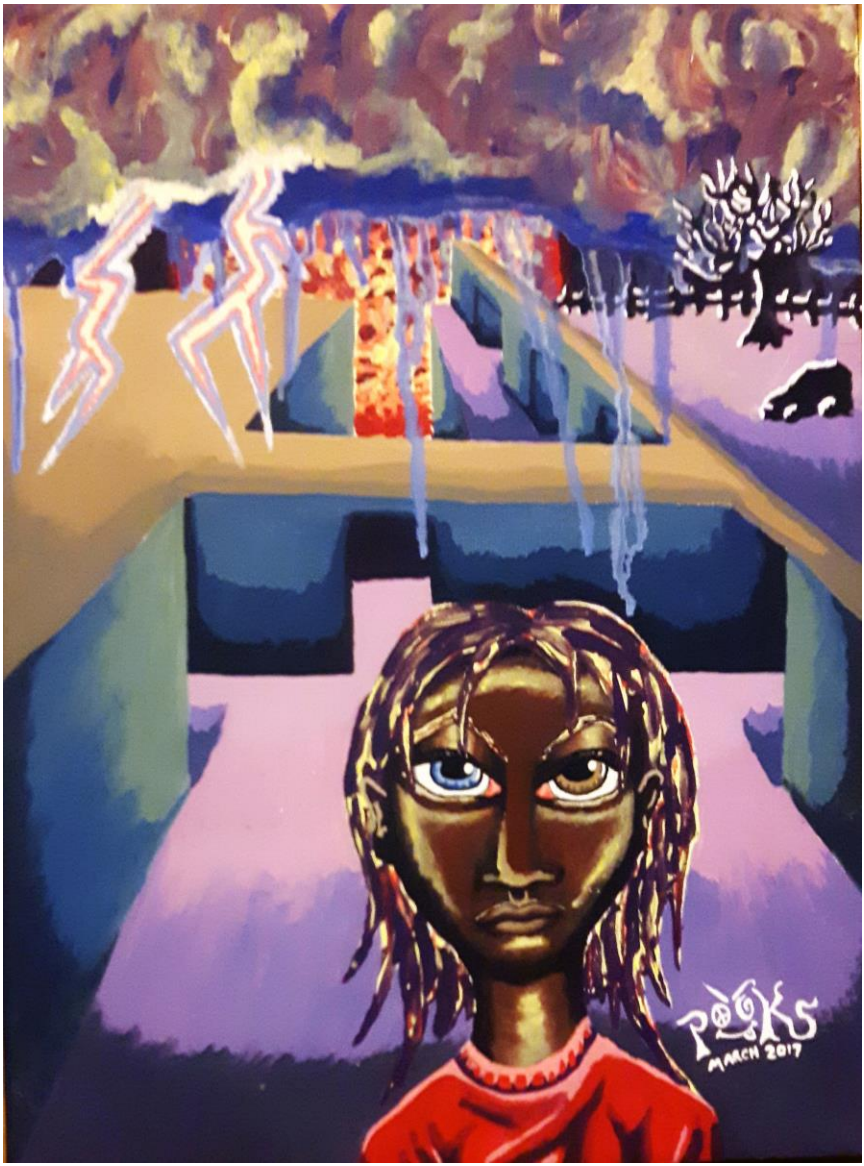
An Argument for Gravity

“All the clouds knew was that they loved him and
wanted to be near him, to cherish him, and to water him.”
— Douglas Adams

Oceans lay between us,
water drops its pressure,
drizzle lives, annoying in insistence.
Gods anoint us in unholy alliance,
wishes say this is our dream,
our dreams tell us otherwise.
231 different names of bodies falling,
I say with obstinate assurance.
230, you say.
And there, you site superior lakes,
I cry a river flowing North,
you insist on weeping South.
An argument increases gravity,
mountains, molehills block our way,
all goes downhill from there.

Rose Aiello Morales has been writing poetry almost as long as she's known how to write. And she's still writing at her home in Marietta, Georgia.

Unseen, 2017 – **Pauline King Shannon (Pooks)**
Acrylic Paint on Canvas, 18” x 12”



Anne Higgins

After a Line from Ezekiel

I keep my Distance from Congress,
From joining this dance,
This trance of doublespeak fast talk,
This prance of smug smiles.
This tense keeps my future in my past.

Oil of wintergreen, of tic tac,
Interrogates a protein,
Questions if a teenaged temper
Will bring on another war.
What will be the next diaspora?
What spores and spondees?
What spontaneous combustion?

These are the remaining tribes:
Secretive Roma gathering their bright shawls of sunset
Apricot and rose colored, gold gleaming,
Silent birders clutching their binoculars,
Stalking the Pine Siskin,
The meadowlark in the tall weeds by the highway,
Shadowy softball girls clothed in their muddy uniforms,
Weeping aides from the crumbled hospices,
Wheeling the loved ones still living.
Shivering Syrian children
Who chew their shoelaces.

These are the exits of the city:
Behind the bombed out grocery store,
Under the ivy shrouded billboard,
Where woods meet river.

Anne Higgins teaches English at Mount Saint Mary's University in Emmitsburg, Maryland. She is a member of the Daughters of Charity. She has had about 100 poems published in a variety of small magazines. Five full-length books and three chapbooks of her poetry have been published including *Vexed Questions* (Aldrich Press, 2013), *Reconnaissance* (Texture Press, 2014), and *Life List* (Finishing Line Press, 2016). Her poems have been featured several times on *The Writer's Almanac.*

Peter Baltensperger

After Her Time

The funeral procession wound its way slowly through the old cemetery, past the trees and the tombstones and the crypts. An elaborately carved and decorated coffin lead the way, her husband close behind like an honour guard, followed by the mourners, some of them sobbing, wiping tears from their eyes, staring out among the weather-worn graves. The bell from the funeral chapel kept tolling its mournful dirge into the still spring air, a stark reminder under the fresh sun, a solemn rhythm for the procession. Her husband kept his hands firmly grasped behind his back, a gesture of bleak resolve.

It was late afternoon, with the sun already nearing the horizon, by the time the cemetery workers arrived at the grave to lower the casket into its eternal tomb and cover it with the forgiving earth. If she had any kind of consciousness at all, she would have realized the absolute finality of her existence symbolized by those last activities. But she was too preoccupied with being dead to pay any attention to the clumps of dirt thundering down on the lid of her permanent abode. She was just grateful that she had been able to exhale that final liberating breath from her tormented body in the confines of her sterile hospital bed and that everything went dark and all the endless pain miraculously disappeared. She thought she could hear all the suffering leaving her, freeing her, giving her new life.

With the final shovels of blanketing dirt covering her own private cave, an impenetrable darkness enveloped her like a peaceful, comforting shroud.

In another kind of darkness, her husband turned around in his bed, kissed his sleeping mistress lightly on her forehead, and went to sleep, the shuffling of the pall bearers on the gravel path still vivid in his mind.

Under Perplexing Skies

Inside a distant star in a galaxy too far away to be seen with the naked eye, a chemical reaction started to happen when it wasn't supposed to happen yet ultimately did, as all things must. It didn't take long in the life of a star for the reaction to expand, destroy the core, and explode in a celestial shower of fire and debris. Few people on Earth were even aware of the cosmic event, far away as it was and of little significance to anyone on the planet. Life simply went on, as it always did.

Francis Cooper was probably the only human who was not only aware of the explosion, but watched it with fascination through his most powerful telescope set up on his balcony. He was an avid amateur astronomer who spent hours sweeping clear night skies in search of meteorites and other space debris. During the day, he scoured the countryside where he thought he might have seen an impact and dug patiently around for remnants from space. He managed to accumulate a considerable collection over the years, yet his favorite specimen remained the first one he had ever found. He always kept it in one of his pockets and had it buried with him in his coffin when he died.

Eons later, when the cemetery had become overgrown beyond recognition and the name on his gravestone was barely visible anymore, an errant junk of the erstwhile star came hurtling through the universe. By pure chance, it was caught in the gravitational pull of the Earth, streaked briefly across the clear night sky, and crashed down into the ancient burial ground. It buried deep into the dirt right next to where his coffin used to be. He would have been thrilled. It was close enough that he could have touched it with his skeletal hands, another manifestation of the fragile futility of the universe.

Peter Baltensperger is a senior Canadian writer of Swiss origin and the author of ten books of various genres. His work has also appeared in several hundred print and on-line publications around the world over the past few decades. He makes his home in London, Ontario with his wife Viki and their four cats and two rather rambunctious puppies, all of them literally inclined.

Brittany Renaud

Girl Wasted

The buzz comes quickly: two glasses of wine, maybe three *Smirnoff Ice,* several cups of vodka and cranberry, my brain feels like it's laughing, buzzing, gathering honey for the hive.

I go dancing, the beat doesn't matter, thirteen years of piano lessons, learning rhythm, mean nothing. Just my hips gyrating, rotating, my heart pounding. My arms and legs don't get much use with club overcrowding, I forget the direction of the ceiling, forget the pain in my feet because of heels worn too high, forget all sense of dignity, sing off key to the music playing over the blaring beat. I hope people will be smiling because of me.

My lips move before my mind can even quiver. It's my heart speaking, my brain has decided to go to sleep. I'm trying awkward flirting with anybody, not realizing what I'm doing. I'm just dancing for me, saying things for me, after the first few bottles, first few cups, everything is a release, everything the best thing I could be doing, even texting people I shouldn't be.

I remind girl-friends they are beautiful, threaten to beat up their boyfriends over hurt feelings. I know they have my back over anything happening. I hiccup like a mouse squeaking after being stepped on. Somehow my friends find this endearing. I'll just keep dancing, dancing, dancing. I'll try to get the boys we've brought involved as they just keep leaning up against the wall or just sitting. I think *you're not being cool, my friend, you're being boring.*

I work at nine in the morning and it's almost past three. We'll keep partying, partying, partying until the room goes from dim to bright lighting. The walk home will be cold, it's snowing and my thighs are showing. I'll scrub off makeup while I'm showering, stuck like hardened icing to my face. The mascara is not really coming off, but I'm well past caring. Tonight, for once, I won't have trouble sleeping.

3-hour Schnitzel

After a trail taken by my extended family
it is suggested by the second oldest
on my mother's side that we go out for dinner
insisting Grand pa must have
some schnitzel.

The curves and waves of Algonquin
slowly melt away to a landscape
more familiar: flat with fields, lacking trees.
Between silence and books and conversation
who would have guessed it'd take three hours
but, Grand pa must have
some schnitzel.

Finally finding the adjoining parking lot,
we must wait even more minutes
so the staff can find some seats for us.
Waiting for schnitzel
(Grand pa must have some schnitzel),
we survey Eganville:
easily walked while waiting for seating,
a town all Torontonians must think
proves all small towns look like:

with an Old Post Office with a clock tower,
with roads that carry cars with only one lane
going each way, with houses built with bricks,
and aging siding, the mortar of which
must be some of that old-folksy cosiness
they've heard so much about.

Returning to that parking lot,
we note this place is named *The Granary.*
It is built with skinny white pillars,
yellow siding making a tall five-sided façade
with black shingles and red and white signs
that scream "barn" that stores already cooked
livestock in schnitzel form
(for Grand pa must have it).

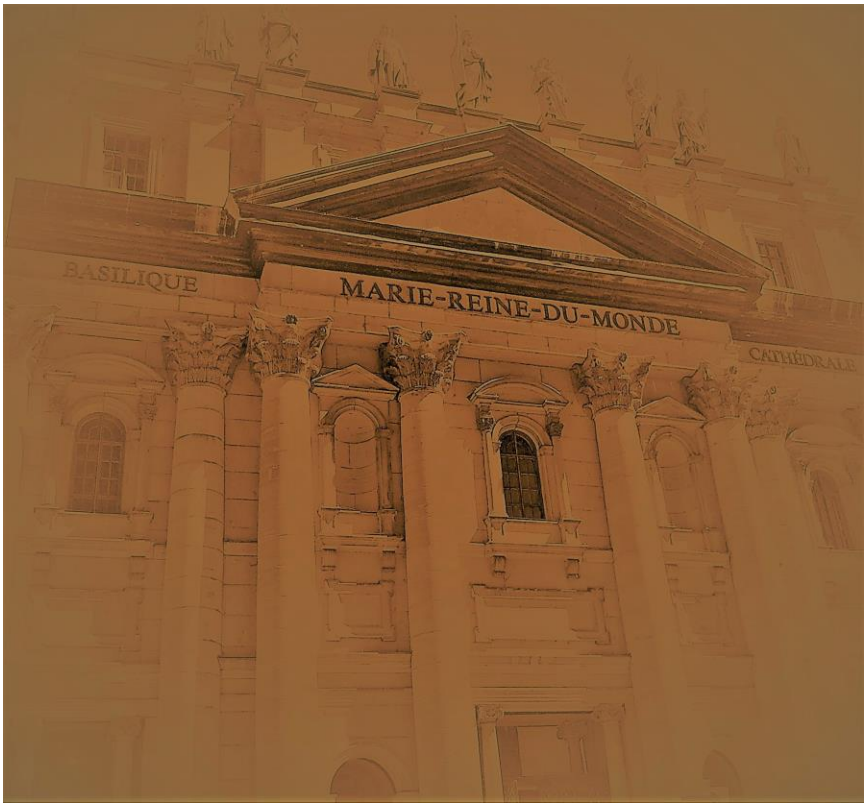
Moving over the threshold,
We're blessed to be surveyed by a cherub
and a giant pig the size of my childhood
home's living room.
The first time we came here
Brooke looked up from her plate
(of schnitzel Grand pa had to have)
and down, up and down,
trying to stare down
that hellish baby.

We leave, bellies satisfied
by meat smashed with a hammer,
adults grumbling about the wasted day.
I run to the bridge over the Bonnechere River
looking modern with its fresh wood and large
metal nails next to the tourist info booth
shaped like a log cabin.
The water is a long way down,
going over a splendiferous dam that waterfalls
with a roar of its passing and the echo of this story
constantly to my Aunt Penny over the years …

of the three hour schnitzel
Grandpa had to have.

Born in Chatham Ontario, **Brittany Renaud** currently lives in London where in 2016 she earned an Honours of Arts Degree with a Specialization in Creative Writing and English Language and Literature; and a Minor in Comparative Literature and Culture at Western University. This aspiring poet has been published in *Synaeresis, Ocassus,* and in the anthology, *Another London* (Harmonia Press, 2016). Brittany has also been awarded 3rd place and Honourable Mention for experimental writing in *Ocassus,* and won the "Judge's Choice" for the *Alfred Poynt Poetry Award* in 2016.

Montreal Cathedral, 2018 – **Andreas Gripp**



upon arrival, 2018 – **Andreas Gripp**



Inside and Out, 2018 – **Pauline King Shannon (Pooks)**



Pauline King Shannon is the artist, blogger, poet, photographer, and author known as **Pooks.** Her published book is called *Random Thoughts of an Alien Goddess.* From 2011 - 2015, Pauline was a New School of Colour artist and has had her art in approximately 25 art shows, including Up With Art (2012, 2014, & 2015) and the Twitter Art Exhibit (Orlando, Florida / NYC, NY / Stanton, Norway / Avon, U.K / Canberra, AUS). She is now an independent artist, and is the writer of the WordPress blog: *Pooks82 The Vault.*

Don Kingfisher Campbell

The Artist

draws in my notebook
hers has been full for 20 minutes

she draws the same things
the same scene over and over

Mom, Dad, Kyla, all with smiling faces
standing next to a house
(we live in an apartment)

the sun is in the upper left hand sky
radiating hairy looking lines above our heads

clouds float like barbeque smoke
over the windows I taught her to cross

with the sign of God — four panes
eyes to the empty residence

we're always outside — like real life
off to school, swim, McDonald's,

the beauty demonstration, the rare family
poetry reading; and when it's dark, home

for a video, a bedtime book; when it's
not too late – when I'm not mad

that she didn't put away her toys,
clothes, hangers – I try to teach her

without ever hitting or yelling
because I did that once

she took the smile off my face
on the next day's drawing

I never want to cry like that again

Don Kingfisher Campbell, MFA in Creative Writing from Antioch University Los Angeles, has taught Writers Seminar at Occidental College Upward Bound for 33 years, been a coach and judge for *Poetry Out Loud,* a performing poet/teacher for Red Hen Press Youth Writing Workshops, Los Angeles Area Coordinator and Board Member of California Poets In The Schools, poetry editor of the *Angel City Review,* publisher of *Spectrum* and the *San Gabriel Valley Poetry Quarterly,* leader of the Emerging Urban Poets Writing and Deep Critique workshops, organizer of the San Gabriel Valley Poetry Festival, and host of the Saturday Afternoon Poetry reading series in Pasadena, California. For awards, features, and publication credits, please go to: http://dkc1031.blogspot.com

Lenny Lianne

In Front of the Arnolfini Marriage Portrait

oil on oak, Jan van Eyck, 1434
National Gallery, London

The grizzled clouds of eleven
splinter into hard rain by noon
so we seek out a museum where
we can meander the rest of the day.

This is not our first vacation
overseas as a couple, even so,
hand in hand, we amble about
when skies seem serene,

and dash, when it showers.
This is how we find ourselves
holding hands in front of
the Arnolfini Marriage Portrait

and peering at the natty twosome
from the fifteenth century.
The man, in a massive, brimmed
hat (braided straw dyed black),

is clad in a tabard (the loose,
sleeveless tunic or surcoat)
which looks like silk velvet
that's been trimmed in sable

while the woman, lost in thought,
waits, holding up her copious
overdress with both its open
sleeves and hem edged in ermine.

But what captivates me the most
are not the opulent garments
nor their grand household goods,
showy comforts of the wealthy,

not even his hand held in the air
as if he's just about to turn
and take hers at the outset
of some mannerly dance

nor the way she gathers
in folds and holds up
her myrtle green skirt as if
about to glide to his lead.

No, it's the cast-off pattens
(wooden, outdoor sandals)
that lie casually scattered,
one fallen on its side,

too apparent to be forgotten
or dismissed – which causes me
to question whether the man
or the woman would pause

long enough from their posing
to stoop and pick up the pattens,
lest one of them trip and tumble,
falling out of the other's reach.

Like Vermeer's Delft

Though damage and detritus
of the past drag on, now's the time
not to submit to the wreckage.

Like Vermeer's Delft, she says,

recalling when large parts of the town
had been leveled or left in ruins by some
mishap at the munitions warehouse

when a man with a lantern

went into the gunpowder tower
which held about ninety thousand
pounds of powder.

In minutes, a roar and rush of force,

then five more massive explosions,
emitting an immense dark cloud
of debris over Delft.

Two days later in the ravaged town,

the painter Egbert van der Poel
buried a daughter who'd perished
in the blast.

Haunted by this catastrophe,

he turned out twenty panoramas
of the area after the disaster, landscapes
of felled buildings and burnt trees.

But the citizens of Delft rallied,

and merely six years later Vermeer
composed his own *View of Delft,*
depicting a repaired and risen town,

its red-tiled roofs and brick buildings
shining with morning sunshine.

Yes, like seventeenth-century Delft,

she tells herself, it takes time
to remake what's been razed.

Some Window

"You act like all those Hopper women,"
slides out of him, a sneer meant to be
as toxic as an asp's or adder's bite,

"looking out some window, always
gawking at God-knows-what – or why."
And it's true, she's often intrigued

by the elsewhere. (But what he means
is that time and again she doesn't listen
to his tirades, their lists of shortcomings.)

Earlier she watched a grey wall of cloud
approaching. A Pacific squall risen up
from somewhere far away, snow flurries

in the Sierras, swollen creeks, then floods.
She considers the progression, the pushing
forward — the way his quarrels roll

from discord through squabble to uproar.
She has no need to turn toward him
to know his raging face. It starts

with a smirk slicing across, with one edge
of lip gliding upward. Then the eyes
tighten. Soon all his features contort and

he's yelling, "Just like that woman
in Hopper's 'Eleven a.m.' The lazy one
who can't even get dressed, except

for her pathetic black flats, who does
nothing but sit by that window
and stare as if she just doesn't care."

She notices, when she gazes outside,
after rain, drenched grass seems white
under a thin translucent skin of water

and light. The asphalt street and stucco
houses waver, streaked in the window
like strips of empty snakeskin.

So many small things and each
she weighs where they come from
and why. Though to anyone observing

her here, she looks so very lost,
as though something familiar slipped
through her well-meaning hands

and remains out of reach, now
only a thing to be dreamed of. Just like
all those lost and lonely Hopper women
staring out some window.

Lenny Lianne is the author of four full-length books of poetry: *A Wilderness of Riches: Voices of the Virginia Colony; The Gospel According to the Seven Dwarfs; Frenzy of Color, Reverie of Line: Poems on Vincent van Gogh's Life and Art; The ABCs of Memory*. She holds a MFA in Creative Writing (Poetry) from George Mason University. She and her husband live in Peoria, Arizona.

Monika Lee

Beginning

In the beginning
a red and white swing,
green wading pool,
games that splash,
tag that freezes,
cans to kick
sardines.

In the beginning
well-worn phrases,
mud-caked Mary Janes,
“girls,” “cheese pieces on toast!”

In the beginning
television was black on white.
Mr. Dressup looked like Daddy,
but Mr. Dressup played
all day all day.

In the beginning,
Grandma called us
her little “how-comes:”
How come you go to work?
How come you don’t play?
How come? How come? How come?

In the beginning
the number three:
three girls and three blue plastic cups.
Gingham dresses, paisley drapes, and rabbit plates,
beloved but mangled dolls,
their intemperate mothers.

Genesis to exodus,
let there be light.
Games that splash, tag that freezes,
cans to kick.
Let there be light.

Swinging, wading, fading.
How come?

Torn

I practise tearing a particular ligament
in my back, tiny rips, regular, repetitive

treatment of stitch on stitch. This feat
is for you, who pinched my heart

and tossed it into the dense blue,
surprised, the same eye

with which you watched when the muscle in my back
spasmed violently, pushing out our child,

splattered, painterly, with my blood. Now another heart to lose,
ordeal accomplished. Carrying organs & tearing them is as close

as I allow myself to oblivion. Please do not look so stricken,
so downcast – we all wear our mothers' blood.

Monika Lee is author of *gravity loves the body* (2008), *skin to skin* (with Shelly Harder, 2016) and *slender threads* (2004). She has published poetry in *Canadian Literature, Vallum: contemporary poetry, Scrivener Creative Review, Windsor Review, Dalhousie Review*, *The Nashwaak Review, Harpweaver, A Room of One's Own*, *Event*, *Atlantis*, *The Fiddlehead*, *Antigonish Review*, *Ariel*, *Quills*, *Qwerty, Ascent,* and many other Canadian and international journals. Her play, "The Petting Zoo," was performed by professional actors as part of the Playwrights Cabaret at the McManus Theatre in London, Ontario. Also the writer of *Rousseau's Impact on Shelley: Figuring the Written Self* (1999) and essays on Shelley, nineteenth-century literature, Canadian literature, and creative writing, she is a professor in the English Department at Brescia University College in London, Ontario.

following caps, 2018 – **Tara Cronin**



grassfish, 2018 – **Tara Cronin**



Tara Cronin is an artist working in various mediums, focusing on photography, installation and book arts. She received her MFA from the ICP-Bard Program in New York. She received her BA in Writing at New School University. She is working with her Partner Ed Chen on translating Egyptian hieroglyphics of the old kingdom into ancient Chinese and modern English.

Roots, 2018 – **Tara Cronin**



Donna Allard

Cat Master

I envy you
as we sit at the kitchen table,
some crystal dishes of candy
placed on doilies
so the old pine table
won't get scratched;
my wine bottle at arm's reach.
You scratch the wood
with all your might
and all I can do
 is glare.

Sunday heat on my back,
my shadow falls
while yours springs up
and tracks south,
toward the door -
compels me to grab the bottle,
fill my glass
and shove the old pine chair backwards,
to rise up
and follow
 my master.

Donna Allard lives in New Brunswick and is the founder of *Sojourner Literary Festival* and author of four books of poetry including *From Shore to Shoormal* (Broken Jaw Press).

Gregory Wm. Gunn

Before I and After

More since in azure, I chose
to come down slowly, the littoral
day through what you named
a *segregated atmosphere*,
I became more myself.

What was that soothing salve
placed lovingly on my face? And
how about those songs of praise
upside my ears? What were
those healing waters tiding
through my mind?

From out my psyche, golden aloe
streamed, and my ears orchestrated
those sacred songs. The I that I
was turning out to be compassed
those tides: I was the earth on
which I trod, as well as the audio/
visual Input I sensed – yes, all
was not from the self; thus,
as a result, I discovered many
selves all more true, and the
ensuing I, more mysterious.

Venus on the Half-Shell

In luscious valve of mother-of pearl,
She nestled merely for a while,
Then suddenly she rose from silence
Into the tempest, O great sea!
Beneath the brine-fizz violence,
Wave-wounded, bound for legacy-
Like status. Labouring at length
Composed on this particular
Historic eve spectacular,
Ascending, trembling, all your strength,
My learned fiery forecaster:
Wide-eyed with skin of alabaster,
We marvel at your breathless beauty,
Admiring your deathless beauty.

O, What a Concept II

Is it O, or should it be
Oh? I don't know for sure.
O seems more ordinary,
or so the story goes.
Lacking aplomb on
most occasions, O's girth
is so much more for
I fail to embrace it wholely.
A promising wordsmith,
a supposed carpenter,
plumber, and wanna-be lion
tamer, I struggle to fashion
handgrips of some sort
and affix them to O
in order to lessen its
boisterous unruliness.

Get-to-the-point Os seem
like gorilla-like Os, or schizo-
phrenic, hymnal Os of
the glossolalia variety;
lamenting Os expressing
earnest prayers, ongoing Os,
and unassuming Os
of bemoaning.

Forever interconnected
compassionately and rather
securely in all of these is
Phenomenal Admiration,
the preceding precious O

Gregory Wm. Gunn was born in 1960 in Windsor. His formative years were spent in a few small towns before finally settling in London, Ontario in 1970. He became interested in the arts, specialising in music and writing during his scholastic time at Fanshawe College in the early '80s, and has been striving industriously, honing his skills in both those and other creative disciplines ever since. He has been widely published in several literary journals including *The Toronto Quarterly, Side B Magazine, Inscribed Magazine, Burning Wood, 20 X 20 Magazine, Crack the Spine, Covalence, Blue Lake Review, Yes Poetry,* and *The Light Ekphrastic.*

Debbie Okun Hill

Tasseography

He reads reference books
large and small print
searches for answers, hopes
to magnify his understanding
of telescopes and microscopes
optic lenses that distort reality
brings objects closer to his nose
like prescription glasses
his perception of present time
altered, then stored as
historical fact

But today, hanging onto
cusp of his mid-life crisis
he tosses aside reasoning
his former scientific quest
for unexplained answers
topics ranging from cells
to black hole phenomena
left floating like vanishing specs
of swirling space matter

Instead, he thirsts for
tasseography
a divination
of flying saucer predictions,
sips slowly on symbols
those abstractions
depicted in tea leaves
stain-painted and
loosely sculptured
on porcelain white tea cup
ponders his own life
mere scribbles of decay
pencil erasable
on universe's
evolving page

Rehabilitation

After she crushed your heart
weakened it by tornado force
you stiffened, evolved
into Dorothy's tin man
an empty aluminum can
battered and dented
your facial features scratched
like static on a broken TV
blue eyes sunk deeper like retracted
ZOOM lenses on digital cameras
your ears, two cell phones stuck
too loud against your head
your voice an answering machine
repeated the same message
over and over, a skipped record

Your former girlfriend's lies
still ran ex's across
your computer screen
your veins, an electric circuit
never allowed to bleed
your encrypted words mimicked
scrambled letters off a key-board

To heal you, I hold your hand
unplug your cord, disconnect
your ex's wireless connection
remove her downloaded virus
that rattled your inner happiness

Time slips forward, soothes your aches
welded tears arc from your face

You turn around, refreshed
pink colour returns to your cheeks

Bottled Water

The eco-friendly cashier at the check-out counter
glared at your purchase
asked you whether you had your own bags
or whether you needed to purchase some –
only 5 cents apiece.

Your eyes rolled like micro-beads
on an ocean floor
and the bottled water you held in your hands
thudded and rolled

on the conveyor belt

before you had a chance to apologize for
your littered past

before you had a chance to encrust her heart
with your three nickels owed for three more plastic bags
wind-blown like SOS flags

into neighbourhood maples.

Debbie Okun Hill is a Canadian poet/blogger and an Ontario Arts Council Writers Reserve grant recipient. To date, over 390 of her poems have appeared in such publications as *Descant, Existere, The Literary Review of Canada, Vallum, Windsor Review* and *Other Voices* in Canada plus *MOBIUS, Philadelphia Poets, The Binnacle*, and *Thema* in the United States. *Drawing From Experience* (Big Pond Rumours Press) and *Chalk Dust Clouds* (Beret Days Press) are her recent chapbooks. Follow her blog, "Kites Without Strings" at https://okunhill.wordpress.com

Andreas Gripp

May Song

Branch's buds
burst into blossoms,
pinkish petals,
grass-green leaves.

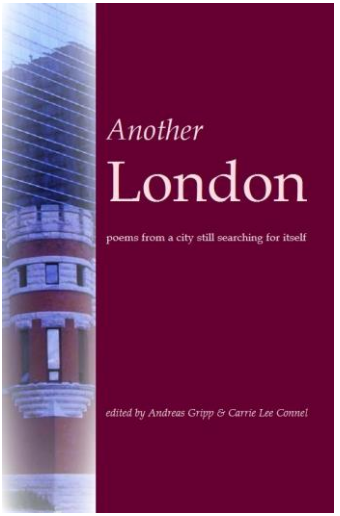
Love leaves
its speckled eggs
in nests.

Eggs are birds
yet to be born.

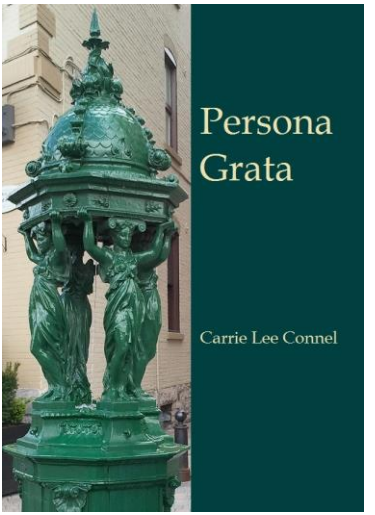
Flight is love ascending,
wings but leaves
not fastened to trees.

Andreas Gripp is the author of 24 books of poetry, 16 chapbooks, and 3 books of fiction. Poems by Andreas Gripp have most recently appeared in the anthologies *Tamaracks: Canadian Poetry in the 21st-Century* (Lummox Press, 2018), *Another Dysfunctional Cancer Poem Anthology* (Mansfield Press, 2018), and *Piping at the End of Days* (Valley Press, 2017). His book *Anathema* was shortlisted for the *Acorn-Plantos Award for Peoples Poetry* in 2010. His latest book of poems is *Selected Poems 4th edition* (Harmonia Press, 2018). He lives in London, Ontario, with his wife Carrie and their two cats, Mabel and Mila.

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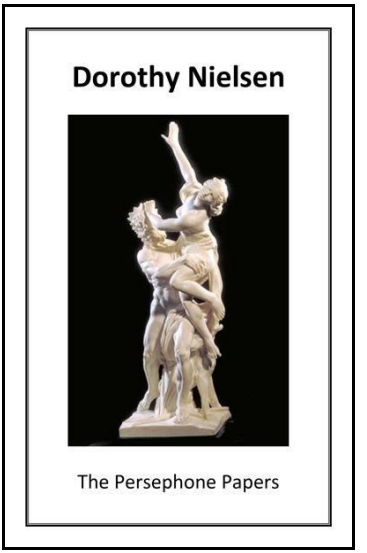
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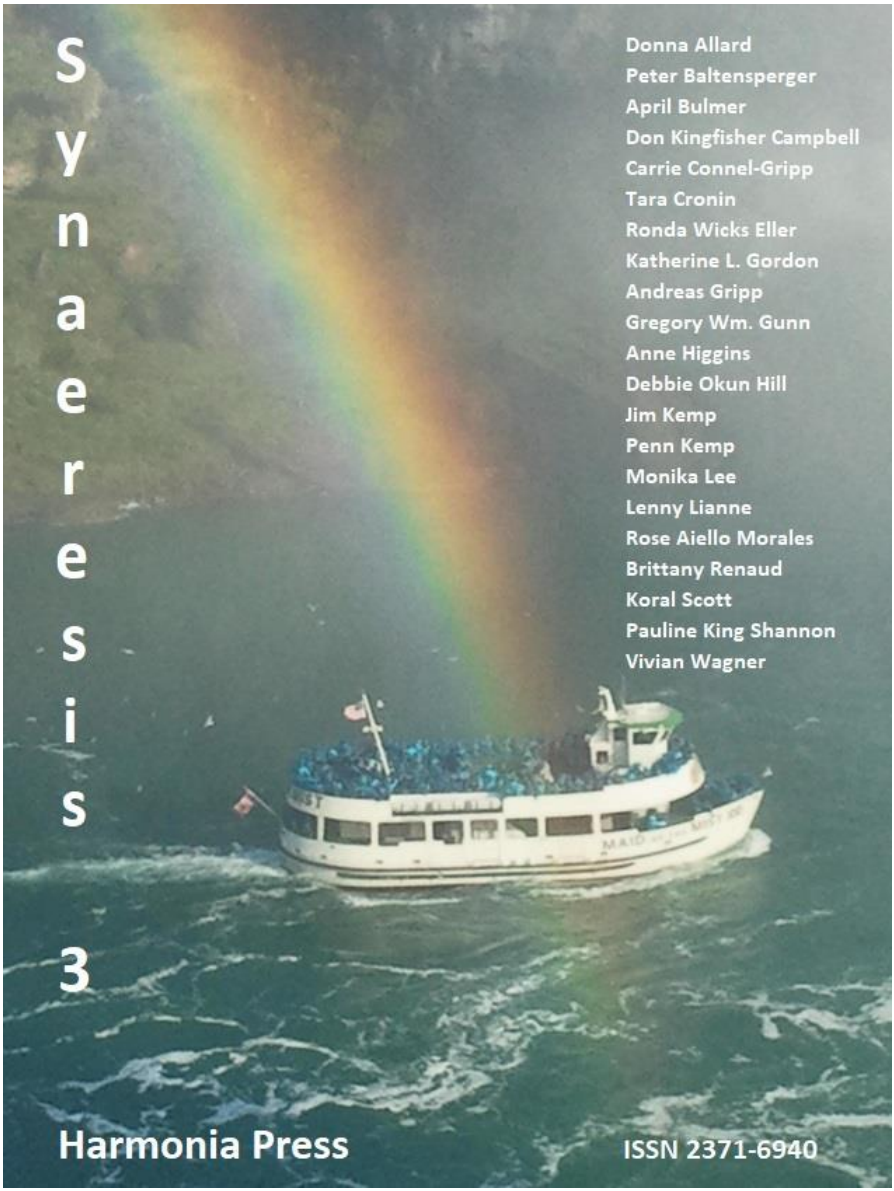


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